

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 171121
ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:WNHOWELL:SAL
APPROVED BY NEA/A N:MDRAPER
NEA:MR. SAUNDERS
S/S-O:JTHYDEN

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O 070151Z JUL 78 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 171121

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE, SY, IS, UN

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN LEBANON

1. SYRIAN AMBASSADOR KABBANI CALLED AFTERNOON JULY 6 ON UNDERSECRETARY NEWSOM AT LATTER'S REQUEST. PRESENT WERE SAUNDERS, DRAPER AND COUNTRY OFFICER HOWELL.
2. NEWSOM SAID HE HAD ASKED KABBANI TO COME BECAUSE WE WERE DEEPLY CONCERNED BY SITUATION IN LEBANON AND WANTED
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TO REVIEW FURTHER WITH KABBANI U.S. VIEWS OF DEVELOPMENTS AND SEEK ANY INSIGHTS SYRIANS AND KABBANI MIGHT OFFER. NEWSOM SAID WE RECOGNIZED SIGNIFICANT ROLE SYRIA HAS BEEN PLAYING OVER MANY MONTHS AS PEACEKEEPER AND HAD HOPED THAT THE RECENT DETERIORATION OF CONDITIONS IN BEIRUT WOULD BE HALTED. IN RECENT DAYS, HE SAID, THESE HOPES HAVE DIMINISHED. THE FIGHTING CONTINUES WITH SUBSTANTIAL LOSSES OF INNOCENT LIFE AND THE FRAGILE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS UNABLE TO COPE. SARKIS WAS THINKING OF RESIGNING. THE U.S., NEWSOM STATED, IS CONCERNED THAT THIS CONTINUING

SITUATION COULD BE USED BY OTHERS AS A PRETEXT FOR INTERVENTIONS THAT COULD WIDEN THE CONFLICT. THEREFORE, HE ADDED, THE U.S. BELIEVES THE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT MUST END IMMEDIATELY FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS AND BEFORE IT EXPANDS IN WAYS THAT COULD THREATEN REGIONAL SECURITY. THE U.S., NEWSOM SAID, HAS BEEN URGING THAT ISRAEL EXERCISE RESTRAINT AND THAT IT USE ITS INFLUENCE TO DISSUADE THE MARONITE MILITIAS FROM PROVOKING FURTHER CLASHES. THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, IS NOW COMING UNDER MOUNTING PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESSURE FOR SOME KIND OF ACTION AND HAD APPARENTLY SENT AIRCRAFT OVER BEIRUT MORNING OF JULY 6.

3. IN LIGHT OF THESE CONDITIONS, NEWSOM CONTINUED, WE HAVE BEEN CONSULTING WITH VARIOUS PARTIES AND OUR CHARGE IN DAMASCUS WAS SEEKING TO TALK TODAY WITH KHADDAM OR HIS DEPUTY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THESE EXCHANGES. WE ARE ALSO CONSIDERING WHETHER IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL TO SEEK A UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON THE SUBJECT AND HAVE BEEN TAKING SOUNDINGS ON THE POSSIBILITY IN NEW YORK. WHAT WE ARE SEEKING, NEWSOM REPEATED, IS TO END THE KILLING FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS AND TO REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF MISCALCULATIONS THAT COULD LEAD TO A WIDER CONFLICT; WE ARE NOT REPEAT NOT SEEKING TO ASSIGN BLAME OR SINGLE
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SYRIA OUT. GIVEN SYRIA'S VITAL ROLE IN LEBANON AND THE CLOSENESS OF OUR BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS ON LEBANESE PROBLEMS OVER MANY MONTHS, WE DID WANT TO SOLICIT SYRIA'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT BE DONE. WE RECOGNIZE, NEWSOM SAID, THE PROBLEMS SYRIAN FORCES ARE FACING, BUT WE BELIEVE SYRIA SHOULD CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING A UNILATERAL CEASEFIRE, EVEN IF THE MILITIAS DO NOT OBSERVE IT PERFECTLY.

4. KABBANI SAID HE UNDERSTOOD AND SHARED USG CONCERNS, BUT THOUGHT ONE MUST BEGIN WITH RECENT EVENTS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS NOW GOING ON. THE MARONITE MILITIAS, THE SAME ONES WHO ARE CONFRONTING THE ADF NOW IN BEIRUT, ARE THE PEOPLE WHO PREVENTED THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 425. THE MILITIAS HAD OPPOSED A QUOTE LEGAL UNQUOTE FORCE (UNIFIL) IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AND ARE NO'CONFRONTING ANOTHER QUOTE LEGAL UNQUOTE FORCE (ADF) IN BEIRUT. THEY ARE, KABBANI SAID, WORKING FOR ISRAEL, WHICH SAID NOTHING ABOUT THE PHALANGIST MASSACRE OF MARONITES AT EHDEN BUT HAS SUDDENLY BECOME THE PROTECTOR OF QUOTE CHRISTIANS UNQUOTE. SYRIA, KABBANI CONTINUED, BELIEVES THE MILITIAS ARE QUOTE TERRORISTS UNQUOTE WHO DON'T WANT TO SEE STABILITY IN LEBANON. THE SYRIANS, HE SAID, CAME TO HELP THE CHRISTIANS, BUT THE MILITIAS HAD 1200 ISRAELIS WITH THEM IN LEBANON. THE FACT, KABBANI ASSERTED, THAT ISRAEL IS NOW FLEXING ITS MUSCLE WITH OVERFLIGHTS AND THREATENING STATEMENTS DOES

NOT MEAN THEY ARE IN THE RIGHT. WHEN THE SYRIAN FORCES FOUGHT LEBANESE LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIANS, NO ONE OBJECTED TO CASUALTIES, LEAST OF ALL THE ISRAELIS. NOW, WHEN THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS ARE THE THREAT TO SECURITY, WE HEAR FROM ISRAEL AND EVEN FROM THE U.S. HOW, HE ASKED,

CAN THESE MILITIAS AND SYRIA BE EQUATED IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL?

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5. NEWSOM REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO CONVEY THE IMPRESSION THAT THE USG SEEKS TO EQUATE THE SYRIANS AND THE MILITIAS IN THE UNSC. THE FACT, HE SAID, IS THAT WE ARE WITNESSING A SERIOUS DISINTEGRATION OF THE LEBANESE POLITICAL FABRIC; THERE ARE STORIES THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS WILL RESIGN AND CONTINUING LOSS OF NON-COMBATANT LIVES. THE USG IS NOT REPEAT NOT TAKING SIDES BUT DOES CONSIDER THAT WE ARE FACING A TRAGIC HUMAN SITUATION WHICH IS NOT IN OUR INTEREST OR THAT OF SYRIA. THE LONGER IT CONTINUES, HE POINTED OUT, THE GREATER WILL BE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OTHERS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CONDITIONS FOR WIDER PURPOSES. EVEN WHILE CONTEMPLATING A UN ROLE, HE REEMPHASIZED, WE WILL BE ATTEMPTING TO WORK OUT NEXT STEPS WITH SYRIA.

6. IN RESPONDING TO A QUERY FROM KABBANI, NEWSOM SAID WE ARE COUNSELLING RESTRAINT WITH ISRAEL, BUT THERE ARE APPEALS FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE FROM THE MILITIAS AND THE QUESTION IS BECOMING AN ISSUE IN THEIR POLITICS. HE ADDED THAT THE ISRAELIS HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY HAVE ADVISED THE MILITIAS NOT REPEAT NOT TO PROVOKE THE SYRIAN FORCES AND TO HOLD THEIR OWN FIRE. THE USG, NEWSOM PROMISED, WILL CONTINUE TO URGE RESTRAINT WITH ISRAEL BUT WE NEED SYRIAN HELP AND A CLEAR IDEA OF SYRIAN PLANS TO MAKE OUR URGING EFFECTIVE. SAUNDERS INTERJECTED THAT OUR ADVICE TO THE ISRAELIS BEGAN WHEN THE VICE PRESIDENT WAS THERE OVER THE WEEKEND.

7. KABBANI RETURNED TO THE DAMAGING PRECEDENT HE FELT HAD BEEN SET IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AND PROFESSED TO SEE THE SAME PATTERN OF BEHAVIOR IN BEIRUT. IT IS IN ISRAELI INTEREST, HE INSISTED, TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM THEIR OWN SCHEMES AND OBSTRUCT USG EFFORTS TO GET THEM TO FOCUS ON

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THE PEACE PROCESS THIS MONTH.

8. KABBANI POINTED OUT THE DIFFICULTY OF FINDING ANYONE WHO CAN ASSURE THE BEHAVIOR OF THE MILITIAS WHICH, HE

SAID, ARE INTENT UPON DIVIDING LEBANON AND HAVE BEEN PROVOKING SYRIAN FORCES FOR AT LEAST TWO MONTHS. SAUNDERS, WHO HAD BEEN CALLED TO THE TELEPHONE, RETURNED TO SAY THAT THERE IS AN APPARENT CEASEFIRE IN BEIRUT AND NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING THE SITUATION. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, HE AND NEWSOM SAID, THE USG WILL HOLD UP ON FURTHER SOUNDINGS REGARDING THE SECURITY COUNCIL. KABBANI SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT WE WERE TALKING AS FRIENDS BUT WANTED THE U.S. TO COMPREHEND THE DIFFICULTIES OF

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ESSENTIAL. HE SAID THE USG BELIEVES THAT WE SHARE COMMON INTERESTS WITH SYRIA IN A STABLE LEBANON AND WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE SYRIAN IDEAS AS WELL.

10. KABBANI LAMENTED THAT THE MILITIAS DO NOT HEED SARKIS AND HAD BLOCKED HIM FROM EXERTING GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY IN THE SOUTH. NEWSOM POINTED OUT THAT THE UN FORCES WERE CONTINUING TO WORK THEIR WAY INTO THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES IN THE SOUTH, BUT THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO LOOK AHEAD, NOT BACKWARD. WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY NOW TO WORK FOR STABILITY.

11. NEWSOM SUMMARIZED THE USG VIEW AS FOLLOWS: WE RECOGNIZE THE VITAL AND SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF SYRIA IN LEBANON AND WANT TO CONTINUE TO WORK CLOSELY WITH SYRIA NOT ONLY TO GET THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD BUT TO PLACE STABILITY IN THE AREA ON A SOUND FOOTING. WE HAVE BEEN AND WILL BE STRESSING TO THE ISRAELIS THE DANGERS

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

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DRAFTED BY IO/UNA:BJSHARP
APPROVED BY IO/UNA:AFHOLLOWAY
S/S-O:DROBINSON

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S E C R E T STATE 171121

EXDIS, FOR AMB YOUNG FROM UNA

FOL RPT STATE 171121 ACTION DAMASCUS TEL AVIV BEIRUT INFO CAIRO
AMMAN JIDDA KUWAIT LONDON USUN NY 7 JUL 78 QUOTE

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UNQUOTE VANCE

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Draft Date: 07 jul 1978
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SITUATION IN LEBANON
TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE, SY, IS, UN, (NEWSOM, DAVID D), (KABBANI, NAJATI)
To: DAMASCUS NIACT TEL AVIV NIACT MULTIPLE
Type: TE
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